

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel Claims 12 to 18 without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein.

Please amend Claims 1 to 11, as follows:

1. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism comprising:

a first holding member arranged to hold a first optical element;

a second holding member arranged to hold a second optical element;

a plurality of coupling members [member] arranged to couple said first holding member and said second holding member, [members with each other] and to permit relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member [members] to be varied in the process of being coupled; and

a plurality of an urging members respectively [member] disposed between each of said plurality of coupling members [member] and said second holding member, and arranged to urge and press said second holding member against said first holding member at least when said plurality of coupling members are [member is] in the process of coupling said first

holding member and said second holding member through
alignment of respective optical axes of the first optical
element and the second optical element [members].

2. (Amended) An optical-element holding
mechanism according to claim 1, wherein each [said] coupling
member is a screw arranged to couple said first holding
member and said second holding member [members with each
other] by press contact [tightening].

3. (Amended) An optical-element holding
mechanism according to claim 2, wherein each [said] urging
member is a deformable washer that generates [having] an
elastic force, and through which a shaft of said screw
pierces.

4. (Amended) An optical-element holding
mechanism according to claim 1, further comprising a
deformation restricting member arranged to restrict
deformation of said first holding member while the relative
positions of said first holding member and said second
holding member [members] are in the process of being varied
and when said plurality of coupling members are [member is]

in the process of coupling said first holding member and said second holding member [members].

5. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 4, wherein said deformation restricting member is disposed between each [said] coupling member and said first holding member.

6. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 4, wherein each [said] urging member is disposed between a [said] coupling member and said deformation restricting member.

7. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 1, further comprising a friction preventing member disposed between each [said] coupling member and said second holding member and arranged to prevent generation of a frictional force between said coupling member and said second holding member when said coupling member is in the process of coupling said first holding member and said second holding members.

8. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 7, wherein movement of said friction preventing member within a plane of varying the relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member [members] is restricted.

9. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 7, further comprising a deformation restricting member arranged to restrict deformation of said first holding member while the relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member [members] are in the process of being varied and when said plurality of coupling members are [member is] in the process of coupling said first holding member and said second holding member [members], wherein said friction preventing member serves also as said deformation restricting member.

10. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 7, wherein each [said] urging member is disposed between a [said] coupling member and said friction preventing member.

11. (Twice Amended) An optical apparatus
comprising:
an apparatus body; and
an optical-element holding mechanism including:
a first holding member arranged to hold a
first optical element;
a second holding member arranged to hold a
second optical element;
a plurality of coupling members [member]
arranged to couple said first holding member and said second
holding member, [members with each other] and to permit
relative positions of said first holding member and said
second holding member [members] to be varied in the process
of being coupled; and
a plurality of [an] urging members
respectively [member] disposed between each of said plurality
of coupling members [member] and said second holding member,
and arranged to urge and press said second holding member
against said first holding member at least when said
plurality of coupling members are [member is] in the process
of coupling said first holding member and said second holding
member through alignment of respective optical axes of the